

Land at the Former Lawrence Weston College, Stile Acres, Lawrence Weston, Bristol

NGR ST 54484 78418

BHER 25652

BRSMG 2017/6



By Gareth Dickinson BA, MA

Avon Archaeology Limited
Bristol: April 2017



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SUMMARY

In March 2017 Avon Archaeology Limited were commissioned by Lidl UK GmbH to undertake an archaeological evaluation on the site of the former Lawrence Weston College, Lawrence Weston, Bristol (centred on NGR ST 54484 78418). The work was carried by the request of the City of Bristol Archaeological Officer, Peter Insole, prior to a proposed development to inform the associated planning process.

Five trial trenches were opened (**Figure 2**): a T-shaped trench measuring 10m x 2m on each axis; one 20m x 2m trench and three 10 x 2m trenches. In total these represent a 2% sample of the site. Few significant archaeological deposits were recorded. A probable buried subsoil was recorded in all trenches below 20th century make-up and levelling deposits associated with the construction and demolition of the Lawrence Weston College. The natural geology was varied with bands of sand and clay. Numerous natural features, mostly tree boles and bioturbation, were recorded, although no dating material was recovered from these features. The most significant feature, a stone spread, was observed in the west end of Trench 3. The nature and extent of this could not be established during the evaluation as it extended beyond the trench to the north, south and west. A small section was excavated although no dating evidence was recovered.

A buried subsoil was recorded to some extent in all of the trenches, which may suggest the possibility of preservation archaeological features and deposits elsewhere on site, beyond the area of the trenches. However the scarcity of finds from all of the trenches suggests the site has low potential.



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Avon Archaeology Limited wishes to acknowledge the assistance given during the project by the following: Nicola Rickford of Lidl UK GmbH, Peter Insole of the City of Bristol Planning Department, Adrian Sarkar, and the staff and students of the Bristol Gateway School. The author would also like to thank Kevin Potter, Joss Davis, Rachel Heaton, Nick Corcos and Sarah Newns for their hard work on site.

NOTES

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAL	Avon Archaeology Ltd
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey



1 INTRODUCTION

This report details the results of an Archaeological Evaluation carried out by Avon Archaeology Ltd on land at the Former Lawrence Weston College, Stile Acres, Lawrence Weston, Bristol (**Figures 1 & 2**). The archaeological evaluation was carried out to inform the planning process related to a forthcoming planning application to develop the site.

The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (AAL, 2017), which was prepared in response to criteria defined by Bristol City Council. The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* issued by the Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists (2014) and the guideline set out by Historic England in MoRPHE (Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment, 2015).

The project was supervised by Kevin Potter, MCIFA, and the work was undertaken between the 2nd and 8th of March 2017. A Bristol Historic Environment Record number has been acquired (BHER 25652) and an OASIS entry opened. An archive will be deposited at the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery under accession number BRSMG 2017/6.



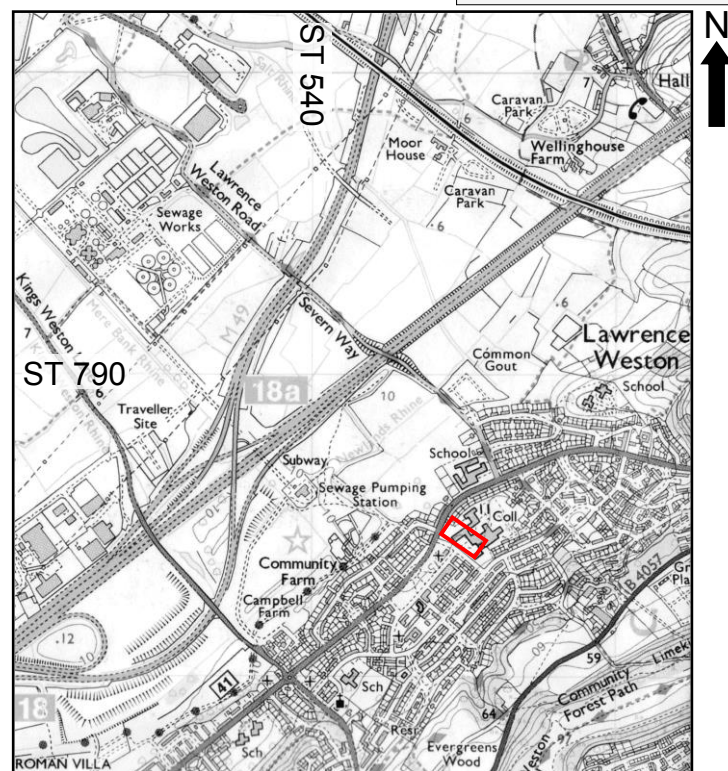
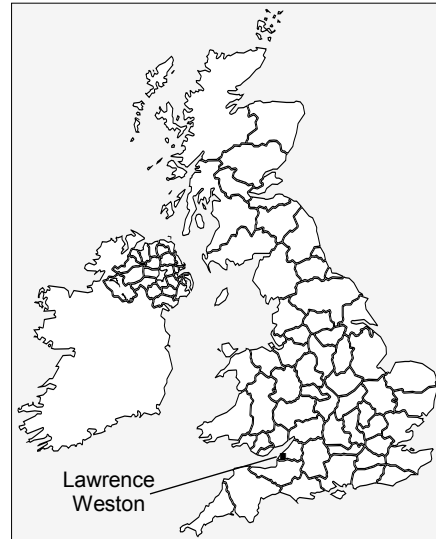
Figure 1

Location of the Study Area

The Study Area



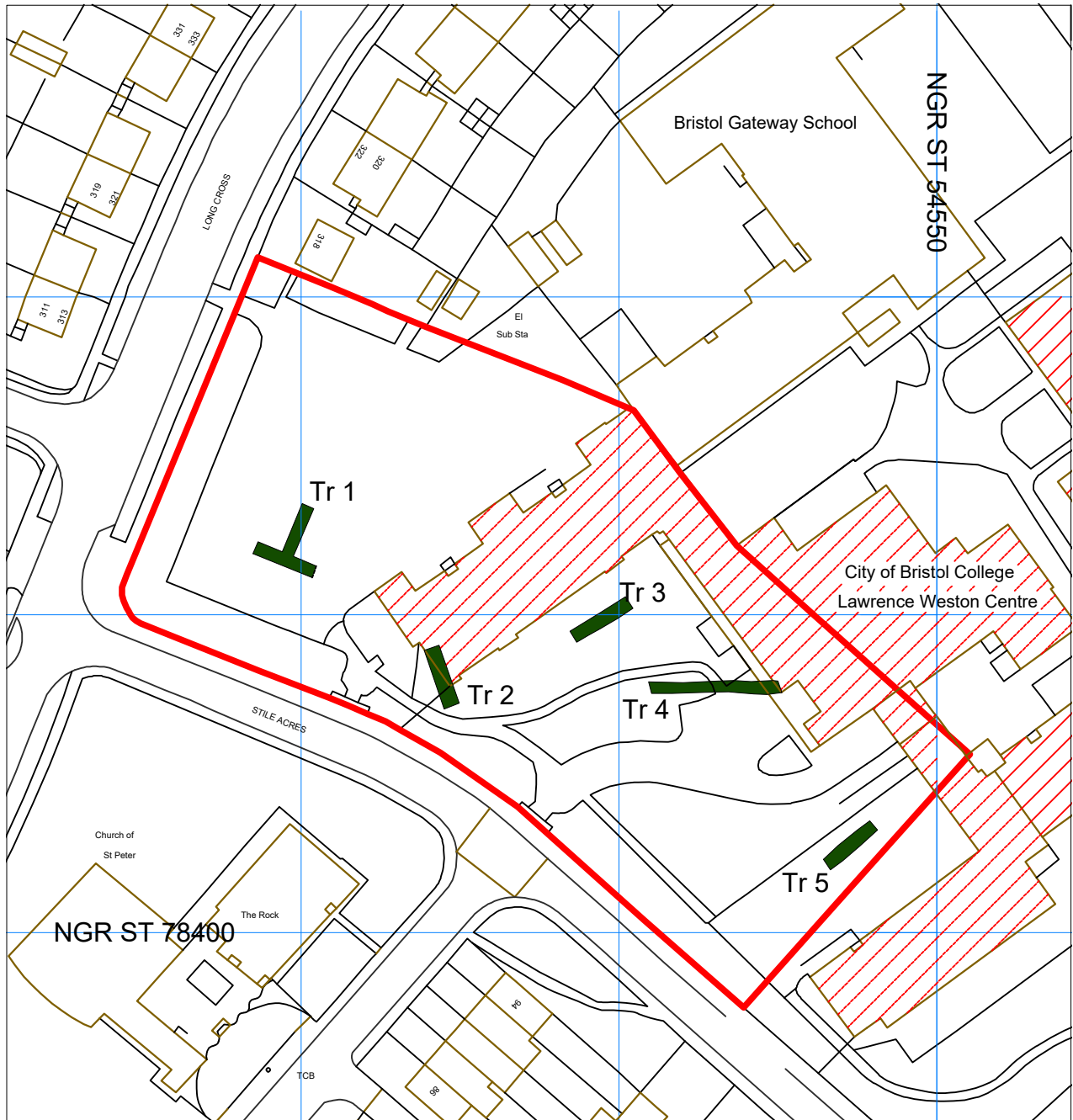
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Figure 2

Site location plan showing
site boundary and location of the trenches



Location of Trenches



Former buildings on site, now demolished

0 100m

2 SITE LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site lies to the north-west of the former rural hamlet of Lawrence Weston, which has now been subsumed by post-war development. It comprises a part of the land on which previously stood the Lawrence Weston College. It is bounded by Stile Acres road to the south-west, Long Cross road to the north-west, The Bristol Gateway School to the north-east, land of the former Lawrence Weston College to the east and Broadlands Drive to the south-east.

The site slopes downwards from approximately 17m aOD in the south-east to approximately 11m aOD in the north-west. Large parts of the site have been subject to shallow terracing and levelling in order to provide a suitable surface to construct the former Lawrence Weston College. A short distance to the north-west lie the floodable lands of the North Avon Levels, where heights rarely exceed 5m aOD.

The underlying geology of the site is the Mercia Mudstone (formerly known as the Keuper Marl) of the Triassic period, described by the BGS as:

'Dominantly red, less commonly green-grey, mudstones and subordinate siltstones with thick halite-bearing units in some basinal areas. Thin beds of gypsum/anhydrite widespread; sandstones are also present' (BGS, 2017).

No superficial drift geology is recorded on the study area.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND DOCUMENTARY BACKGROUND

The site has been the subject of an archaeological desk-based assessment conducted by AAL in 2016 (Corcos, 2016). The account which follows is based wholly on this previous study.

Until well into the 20th century, the site consisted of undeveloped pasture land within the Lawrence Weston tithing of Henbury parish. By the late Anglo-Saxon period Henbury was a large and important estate, however it had clearly formed part of a larger territorial entity centred on Westbury on Trym. At the time of Domesday in 1086 it was recorded as a member of the Westbury estate, which from at least the 10th century had belonged to the See of Worcester.

The origins of Lawrence Weston itself are less clear. The earliest known reference to Lawrence Weston by name is in the 13th century (Smith, 1964, 133), although it may well be of late Anglo-Saxon foundation. The place-name suggests that Lawrence Weston was a subsidiary manor, with a medieval chapelry dedicated to St Lawrence (ibid), to the west of the main estate at Henbury.

Little is known about the agrarian history of Lawrence Weston other than what can be inferred from occasional references, for example:

'All his land and pasture and meadow which he has in the marsh of Westone Sancti Laurencii in the furlong called Lockyngham, in a small meadow between the sea and the meadow of Madham; for their lives, rent 5s. a year, and they are responsible for the sea-wall between the sea and the said land' (Wells-Furby 2004, 498).

An open-field arable system was certainly in operation during the medieval period as remnants of it were still in existence when a map of the Kingsweston estate was drawn up in the 18th century. These remaining open-fields were fully enclosed by the time the tithe map was drafted in the 1930s/40s (BHER, EP/A/32/22).

Lawrence Weston appears to have remained a fairly rural hamlet until the construction of large housing estates following the Second World War (Corcos, 2016, 15). The buildings which later became the Lawrence Weston College first appear on a 1953 OS map (ibid) and prior to this the site was entirely undeveloped. Similarly all of the roads bounding the

site (Stile Acres to the west, Long Cross to the north, Broadlands Drive to the south and Lawrence Weston Road to the east) were post war provisions, although the latter lay, in part, along a routeway of at least medieval date.

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Listed Buildings within the bounds of the site, however Romano-British activity in the immediate area is well attested. The Kings Weston Roman Villa lies just under 1.5km to the south-west of the site.

In the 1950s large quantities of Romano-British pottery were recovered from a location 100m to the south-east of the site (BHER 23766). No details are known as to the circumstances surrounding the discovery of this material although Corcos (2016, 16) suggests that it may have been during the groundworks associated with the construction of the school itself.

A potential Romano-British kiln (HER 23769) site has been identified on the site of what is now St Bede's Roman Catholic School, to the north-east of the site. To the west of the site (BHER 20234, BHER2323M, BHER 24663) Romano-British enclosures, ditches and surfaces, residual Mesolithic flints and late Iron Age-Early Romano British roundhouses have been recorded during several separate archaeological works.

4 METHODOLOGY, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the archaeological fieldwork were defined in discussion and agreement between Peter Insole of Bristol City Council and Avon Archaeology Ltd. The evaluation covered a 2% sample of the site, achieved by trenches distributed across it, while avoiding known underground services. The objectives and methodology for the work were formally laid out in a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Avon Archaeology Ltd (Dickinson, 2017) and approved by Peter Insole.

Since the site extends to approximately 7ha, the required sample size entailed the excavation of 70m of standard, 2m-wide linear trenching (an area of 140m² in total). The trenching was divided between 5 trenches; 3 trenches of approximately 10m; a single 'T' shape trench with each axis measuring 10m, and a final trench of 20m length.

This proposed scheme of work aimed to establish the presence or absence of significant archaeological features and deposits, and to investigate and record all such remains. Where possible the form, extent, date and importance of any remains will be characterised.

The standards and guidelines set out in MoRPHE (Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment), and the relevant guidelines issued by the Institute for Archaeology were followed during the project.

The trenches were opened using a mechanical excavator to the first significant archaeological or geological deposit. The Avon Archaeology single context recording system (AAL 2013) was used to create written records of all features and stratigraphic units. Trenches were located, planned and levelled using a survey grade GPS unit.

5 RESULTS

- **General Stratigraphy**

Five trenches were excavated across the site (**Figure 2**). All displayed a comparable stratigraphic sequence. The natural substrate was, in most cases, a red clay with lenses of interbedded sand.

In trenches 1 and 3 natural features in the form of tree boles and bioturbation were recorded at the level of the natural substrate. A silty clay deposit, interpreted as a buried subsoil, was observed, to some degree, in all trenches. A single fragment of green glazed pottery was recovered from this deposit in Trench 1; it was not retained. A stone spread, beneath the subsoil in Trench 4 represents the only archaeological feature recorded during the evaluation.

Overlying the buried subsoil were 20th century deposits and features associated with the construction, use and demolition of the former Lawrence Weston College.

A brief description of each of the trenches is given below:

- **Trench 1 (Figure 3, Plates 1 - 3)**

Trench 1 was located to the north-west of the site in what is currently a carpark owned by Bristol City Council and used by the Bristol Gateway School (**Figure 2**). It was excavated in a T-shape with axes facing north-east by south-west and north-west by south-east. The natural substrate (context 104) in this trench, approximately 0.75m below the current ground level, was primarily an orange red clayey silt although running throughout it were mottles and lenses of blueish grey clay (**Plates 1, 2 & 3**). A box section was excavated through the natural in the north-east end of the trench to a depth of 13.66m aOD (**Plate 3**). Running broadly north-west to south-east across the trench were two linear features and these were given a single context number (104) (**Plate 3**). These features proved to be natural, probably caused by bioturbation. Overlying this was a greyish blue sandy clay (context 103), approximately 0.1-0.2m thick, which was identified as a gleyed buried subsoil (**Plate 3**). A single fragment of green glazed pottery was recovered from this deposit but not retained. Modern deposits overlay this deposit which included an orange red sandy clay levelling layer, 0.1m thick, (context 102); a mixed brick rubble make-up layer, 0.3m deep, (context 101); and the tarmac surface of the current carpark, 0.1m thick, (context 100) (**Plate 3**).

- **Trench 2 (Figure 3, Plates 4 - 6)**

Trench 2 was excavated to the south-east of Trench 1. It was aligned north north-west by south south-east on the edge of a demolished building which formed part of the former Lawrence Weston College (**Figure 2**). Natural substrate (context 202) was reached at a height of 14.8m aOD, approximately 0.6m below the current ground level and consisted of a mid reddish brown clayey silt with some dark reddish-brown lenses and mottles (**Plates 4 & 5**). A dark reddish brown clayey silt with occasional charcoal inclusions (context 201) was observed overlying the natural. It appeared throughout the trench, albeit intermittently in the west, and was interpreted as the remains of a buried subsoil (**Plate 6**). Overlying this were a number of features associated with the former Lawrence Weston College including: a concrete foundation and stanchion bases (contexts 203, 204 and 208); pipe trenches (contexts 206 and 207); and a brick built manhole base (context 205) (**Plates 4 & 5**). These features were overlain by modern

rubble deposits (contexts 200 and 203) associated with the demolition of the former Lawrence Weston College (**Plates 4 & 5**).

- **Trench 3 (Figure 4)**

This trench was located to the east of Trench 2 and aligned north-west by south-east (**Figure 2**). The natural substrate (context 302), observed at a minimum depth of 0.6m below current ground level, was broadly the same as that in Trench 2 (**Plate 7**). This was cut by a linear feature in the north-east of the trench (context 306) (**Plate 8**), which was most likely a natural depression in the underlying geology, and a tree bole (context 304) (**Plate 9**) in the south-west of the trench. These features were overlain by a buried subsoil (context 301) which was equivalent to those observed in Trenches 1 and 2 (**Plate 8**). Overlying this was a mixed deposit of rubble and redeposited topsoil (context 300) (**Plate 8**).

- **Trench 4 (Figure 4)**

Trench 5 measured 20m in length and was located to the south-east of Trench 3 (**Figure 2**). The natural substrate (context 402) was the same Mercia Mudstone observed in the other trenches (**Plate 10**). Overlying this in the extreme west was a brownish red sandy silt (context 413) (**Plate 11**) which was in turn overlain by a stone spread (context 412) (**Plate 12**). The stone spread comprised a variety of stone types including mudstone, limestone and sandstone, and was sloping down slightly to the west, approximately 0.15m deep and 0.5m below the current ground level. This deposit was sealed by buried subsoil (context 411) (**Plate 11**), which was truncated throughout the trench apart from the far west, by features associated with the former Lawrence Weston College, which included: services (contexts 403 and 408); manhole bases (contexts 404 and 407); concrete slab and kerbing (contexts 409 and 406); and remains of a modern brick wall (context 410) (**Plate 13**). Overlying all of this was a mixed rubble levelling deposit, maximum of 0.3m thick, (context 401) which was overlain by a tarmac surface, 0.13m thick, (context 405) in the east and a mixed topsoil and demolition rubble, 0.2m deep, deposit (context 400) in the west.

- **Trench 5 (Figure 4)**

Trench 5 was aligned north-east by south-west on a terrace to the south-east of the site. The natural substrate (context 504) was of the same type seen in trenches 2 – 4 and lay approximately 0.7m below the current ground level (**Plate 14**). A dark bluish grey, buried subsoil, approximately 0.25m thick (context 503) overlay the natural. This was overlain by: a thin, 0.12m thick, orange brown sandy clay levelling layer (context 502); a mixed rubble levelling/makeup layer, approximately 0.35m thick, (context 501); and a tarmac surface, 0.03m thick, (context 500).

7 CONCLUSIONS

No archaeological features or deposits of significance were recorded in the majority of the trenches, which revealed only geological deposits and natural features, beneath a buried subsoil and modern deposits and features. The presence of subsoil in all trenches however, does suggest that levelling and terracing of the site has not impacted significantly on the earlier ground level, which may contain archaeology.

The exception to this was Trench 4 which contained a stone spread (context 402). It was not possible to fully characterise the nature, extent or date of this stone spread; however, when considering the known Romano-British activity in the area the potential for the feature dating to this period cannot be ruled out.

The results of the present evaluation indicate that the site, for much of its history, has remained as open, undeveloped land, probably for agricultural use. The lack of archaeological evidence indicates that the site has low potential.

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APPENDIX 1

Trench 1		
Orientation/length		NE by SW and NW by SE. T-shape 10 x 2 on each axis
Context	Description	Dimensions
100	Tarmac	Thickness 0.1m
101	Make-up. Mixed Brick rubble, clinker etc.	Thickness 0.3m
102	Levelling layer. Orange-red sandy clay with occasional sub-angular limestone frags.	Thickness 0.05-0.1m
103	Buried subsoil. Greyish-blue silty clay.	Thickness 0.1-0.2m
104	Natural variation/bioturbation. Mixed blueish-grey sandy clay with orange red mottles.	Approx. 0.9m below surface
105	Natural Mercia Mudstone. Orange-red sandy clay.	-

Trench 2		
Orientation/length		NNW by SSE 10m x 2m
Context	Description	Dimensions
200	Demolition spread. Crushed concrete rubble and brick.	Thickness 0.48m max
201	Buried subsoil. Dark reddish-brown clayey silt with occ. Charcoal and greyish white mortar inclusions. Only in west of trench.	Thickness 0.1m
202	Natural Mercia Mudstone. Dark to mid reddish-brown, clayey silt.	-
203	Concrete slab.	Width 0.6m. 0.25m below surface
204	Post/stanchion base. Sub square cut. 0.45m x 0.45m.	0.29m below surface
205	Brick manhole base. Two courses visible. E-W 0.76, N-S 0.94	Height >0.13
206	Modern electric cable duct.	Depth >0.1m
207	Modern ceramic pipe trench.	Depth >0.05m
208	Concrete post setting.	Thickness 0.05m
209	Mixed modern deposit.	Thickness 0.07m

Trench 3		
Orientation/length		NW by SE 10m x 2m
Context	Description	Dimensions
300	Demolition spread/levelling deposit. Crushed concrete rubble and brick mixed with redeposited topsoil.	Thickness 0.18m
301	Buried subsoil. Reddish-brown silty clay.	Thickness 0.4m
302	Natural Mercia Mudstone. Dark to mid reddish brown, clayey silt.	-
303	Fill of 304. Mid reddish- brown sandy silt with frequent small sub-angular limestone.	Thickness 0.39m



304	Tree bole. Irregular shape in plan and section.	Thickness 0.39m
305	Fill of 306. Reddish brown silty clay, very similar to 301.	Thickness 0.1m
306	Cut/depression in natural. Linear in plan, flattish base, gently sloping sides.	Thickness 0.1m

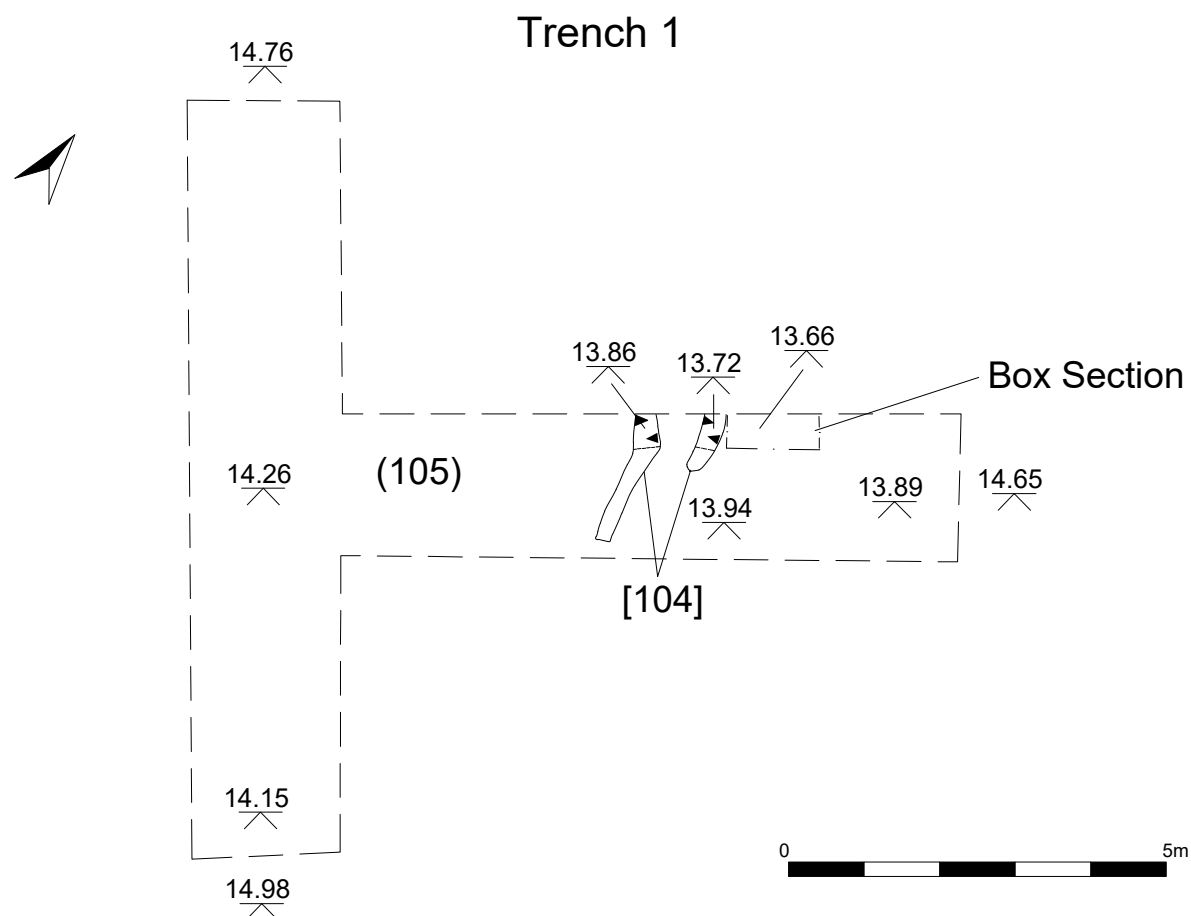
Trench 4		
Orientation/length		E by W 20m x 2m
Context	Description	Dimensions
400	Demolition spread/levelling deposit. Crushed concrete rubble and brick mixed with redeposited topsoil.	Thickness 0.2m
401	Demolition spread/levelling deposit. Crushed concrete rubble and brick mixed with redeposited topsoil.	Thickness 0.3m
402	Natural Mercia Mudstone. Dark to mid reddish brown, clayey silt.	-
403	Modern electric cable duct.	0.4m below surface
404	Modern drain. Concrete.	Thickness >0.2m
405	Tarmac.	Thickness 0.13m
406	Concrete foundation and kerbs.	Thickness 0.13m
407	Manhole base. Brick, 3 courses exposed.	Depth > 0.53m
408	Modern drain. Concrete.	0.4m below surface
409	Concrete slab/foundation base.	0.6m below surface
410	Modern brick foundation.	0.05m below surface
411	Buried subsoil. Reddish-brown silty clay.	Thickness 0.3m
412	Stone spread. Mix of sandstone. Mudstone and limestone.	Thickness 0.16m
413	Brownish red silty clay with occ. manganese flecks.	Thickness 0.15m

Trench 5		
Orientation/length		NE by SW 16.9m length
Context	Description	Dimensions
500	Tarmac.	Thickness 0.03m
501	Make-up/levelling layer. Mix of brick rubble, angular limestone and slag.	Thickness 0.35m
502	Levelling layer. Mid reddish-orange sandy clay.	Thickness 0.12m
503	Buried subsoil. Dark blueish-grey sandy clay.	Thickness 0.25m

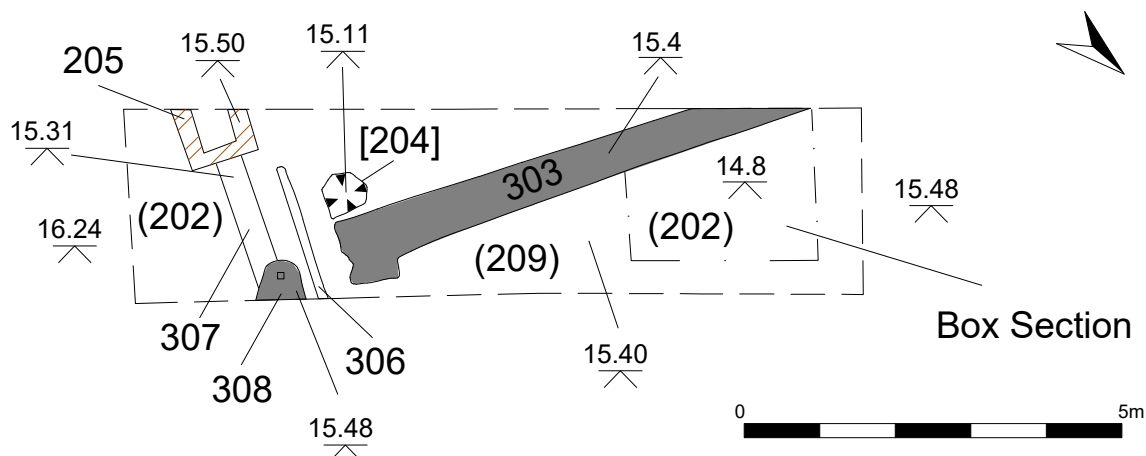
504	Natural Mercia Mudstone. Dark to mid reddish-brown, clayey silt.	-
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Figure 3

Trench Plans



Trench 2



Key

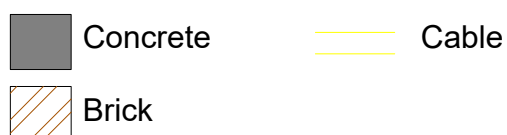
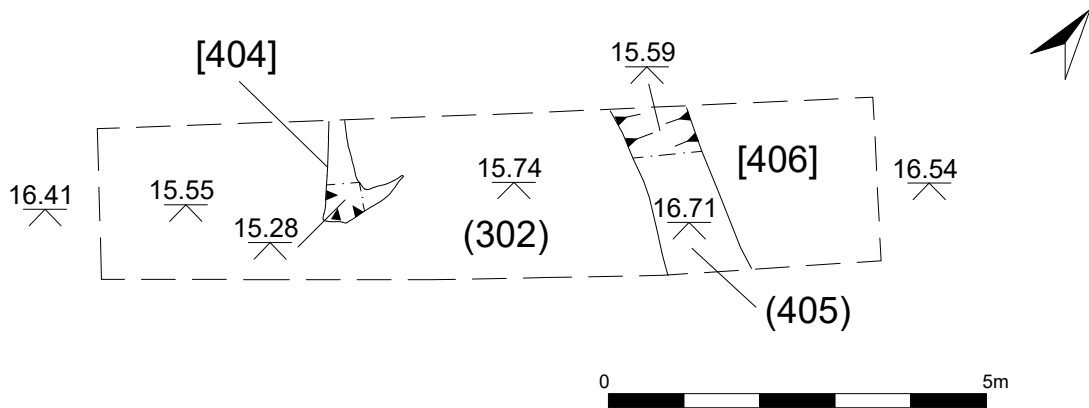


Figure 4

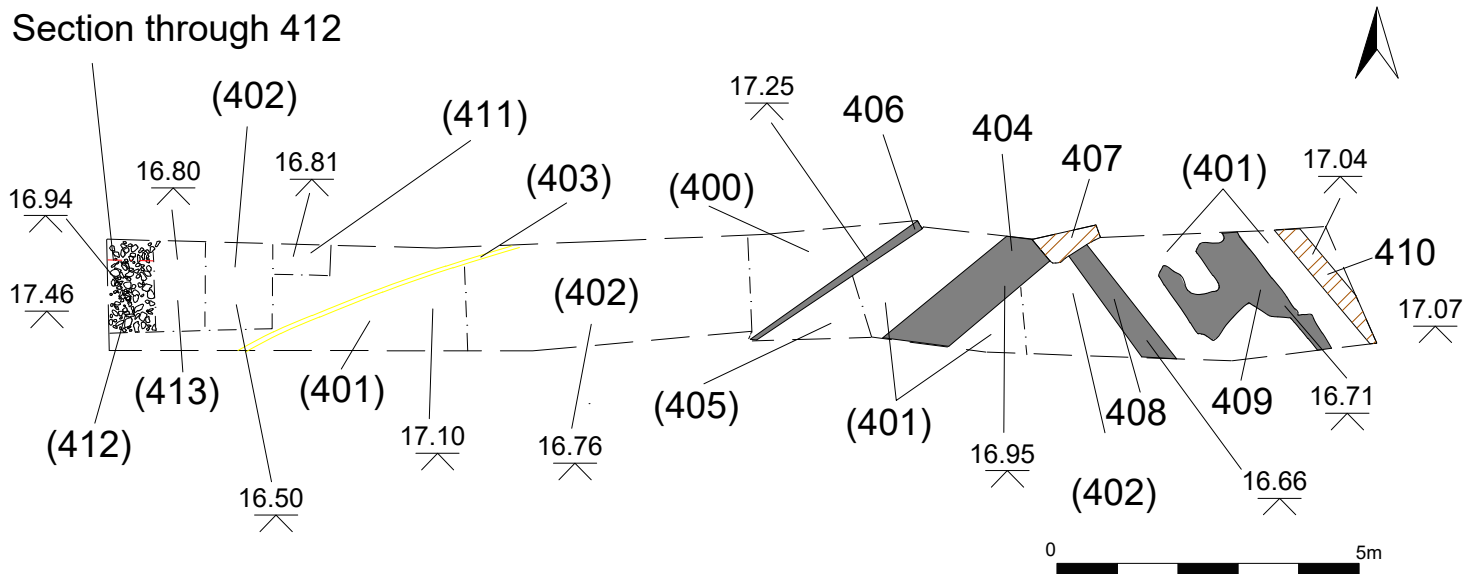
Trench Plans

Trench 3

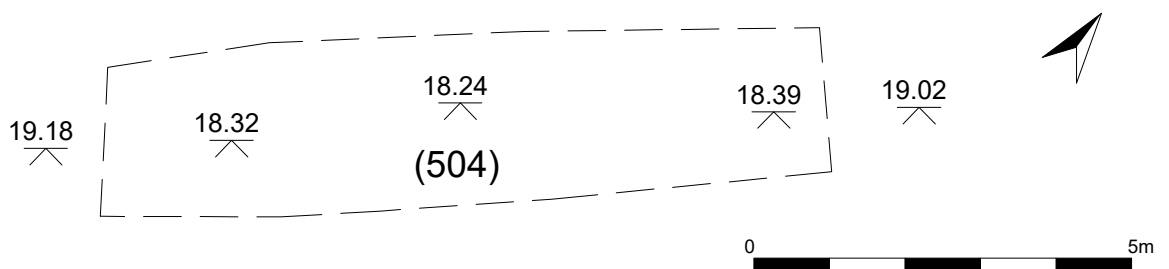


Trench 4

Section through 412



Trench 5



PLATES



Plate 1: Looking south-west at Trench 1.
2 x 1m scales.



Plate 1: Looking north-west at Trench 1.
2 x 1m scales.



Plate 3: Looking north-west at south-east facing section. Box section through natural (104) is on the right of the photo and natural features [104] are on the right. 1 x 2m and 1 x 1m scales.



Plate 4: Looking south south-east at Trench 2. 2 x 1m scales.



Plate 5: Looking north north-east at Trench 2.
2 x 1m scales.



Plate 6: South-west facing section of Trench 2. 1 x 1m
scale.



Plate 7: Looking south-west at Trench 3. 2 x
2m scales.



Plate 8: South-east facing section of Trench 1 show-
ing linear natural depression [406]. 1 x 1m and 1 x
0.6m.



Plate 9: South-east facing section through tree bole [404]. 1 x 1m and 1 x 0.2m scales.



Plate 10: Looking east at Trench 10. 2 x 1m scales.



Plate 11: South facing section through Trench 4 showing stone spread 412, buried subsoil (411) and deposit (413). 2 x 1m scales.



Plate 12: Looking west at stone spread 412. 2 x 1m scales.



Plate 13: Looking west at modern features in the east end of Trench 4. 2 x 1m scales.



Plate 14: Looking south-west at Trench 5. 2 x 1m scales.



Plate 15: South-east facing section through Trench 4. 1 x 2m scale and 1 x 1m scale.